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Bullshot: sporting shooting, alcohol and the two cultures.

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Abstract:	<p>The paper discusses the role and function of alcohol in sporting shooting in the UK. It seeks to understand and critically comment upon alcohol consumption relating to this sport, to widen empirical knowledge of sporting shooting and to use the lens of alcohol to enhance our theoretical understanding of changes taking place in the global countryside. The paper contextualises the activity of sporting shooting by discussing the characteristics of game shooting participants and also the nature of sporting shooting in Britain and Ireland using examples from the pro-shooting press and shooting memoirs. The paper then unpacks the role alcohol fulfils during the sporting day and questions whether it is problematic in this sport on three grounds: the health and safety of participants; for the policing and regulation of legal gun ownership and; for the sustainability and viability of sporting shooting in a changing global countryside. The paper enhances knowledge and understanding in the sociology of sport by broadening the notion of sporting conduct within the sport-alcohol nexus. Examining the sport-alcohol nexus in the context of sporting shooting and by demarking changes taking place in the British countryside itself. Two cultures participate in game shooting: for its intrinsic reward (the 'true countryman') and those perceiving the countryside and its elite activities in more instrumental terms (the networker). The long-term implications of this trend are unknown, but it may indicate a threat to the sustainability and long-term viability of sporting shooting if it becomes a purely commercial venture.</p>

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For Peer Review

Abstract

The paper discusses the role and function of alcohol in sporting shooting in the UK. It seeks to understand and critically comment upon alcohol consumption relating to this sport, to widen empirical knowledge of sporting shooting and to use the lens of alcohol to enhance our theoretical understanding of changes taking place in the global countryside. The paper contextualises the activity of sporting shooting by discussing the characteristics of game shooting participants and also the nature of sporting shooting in Britain and Ireland using examples from the pro-shooting press and shooting memoirs. The paper then unpacks the role alcohol fulfils during the sporting day and questions whether it is problematic in this sport on three grounds: the health and safety of participants; for the policing and regulation of legal gun ownership and; for the sustainability and viability of sporting shooting in a changing global countryside. The paper enhances knowledge and understanding in the sociology of sport by broadening the notion of sporting conduct within the sport-alcohol nexus. Examining the sport-alcohol nexus in the context of sporting shooting and by demarking changes taking place in the British countryside itself. Two cultures participate in game shooting: for its intrinsic reward (the 'true countryman') and those perceiving the countryside and its elite activities in more instrumental terms (the networker). The long-term implications of this trend are unknown, but it may indicate a threat to the sustainability and long-term viability of sporting shooting if it becomes a purely commercial venture.

Introduction

Ever shifting social concerns can be explored through the sociological study of alcohol and drunkenness. Gender, age and embodiment are here the main themes but such are invariably situating in shifting terrain of spatial, political and cultural reconfigurations relating to the post-industrial landscape of modern Britain (Thurnell-Read, 2013:8.2).

‘On Ilkla Moor Baht ’at’ – the unofficial Yorkshire anthem – features in the British television classic series, *All Creatures Great and Small*, and is sung during a raucous rural pub afterhours lock-in. Rural drinking in public or semi-public spaces is often associated with the quiet, remote pub. Here, due to the lack of immediate police presence, official opening hours reached long into the night and there was little risk of being caught drink-driving home. However, much has changed in recent decades in the British countryside. Sustained campaigns to change the cultural acceptability of drink-driving as well as rural pub closures on a significant scale have curtailed rural drinking (Markham, 2011). In addition, theoretical analyses of rural spaces now recognise that they are culturally performed, too. Hence rural spaces are no longer simply dominated by agricultural economic forces, but have become sites of consumption. As Edensor (2006) phrases it, the countryside is now a source of ‘edutainment’ and Halfacree (2007) captures that actors on the ground are now, too, key players in the social construction of rural spaces. Lifestyle and leisure are now important aspects of rurality. So, as Thurnell-Read (2013) notes above, social, political and cultural factors are now influencing urban landscapes, but this is equally so for rural spaces.

The specific focus here is upon a rural space where drinking continues to take place in

semi-public and is linked to a highly traditional rural activity – sporting shooting. How alcohol consumption features, has endured and in what form will be examined. Methodologically, countrysports are profoundly difficult to empirically access firsthand, given their beleaguered status (Hillyard and Burridge, 2012). They are beleaguered in the sense that hunting with hounds was banned in the UK in 2005 and sporting shooting, as another countrysport, has come under profound attack by those critical of shooting live quarry for purely sporting purposes. Organisations such as the League Against Cruel Sports (LACS), Animal Aid and even organisations with royal patronage and charitable status, such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, have expressed opposition to the game shooting industry. The LACS is, quite literally, ‘gunning for change’ (LACS, 2013). The nature of sporting shooting is also difficult to comprehend because it is a ‘closed’ or very difficult cultural world for those unfamiliar with the sport to grasp. That is, it requires translation in order to comprehend its social meaning in terms of conduct, etiquette and rituals (Cox et al., 1996). In relation to alcohol consumption, there is no formal evidential basis to gauge the extent of its consumption in sporting shooting. For the purposes of generating a critical discussion here, the popular shooting press and the memoirs and instructional guides of sporting shooters that are in the public domain will be used. The sporting press itself reflects the diversity of shooting, from clay pigeon enthusiast to grouse moor regular. These accounts provide an insiders’ view, an advocate’s perspective and hence they offer only a ‘front stage’ performance of the activity. Nevertheless, it is a legitimate approach used by others. Thurnell-Read (2013) made extensive use of media portrayals and stereotypical imagery to analyse the “apparent fascination with the ale drinker’s body being a failed male body” and representations of the young lager drinker “being sick in a splashily exuberant way” (Thurnell-Read, 2013: 6.6,

5.3). Smith and McElwee (2013) have commented elsewhere on the difficulties of accessing the under-belly of semi-private and semi-legal rural activities and used self-reporting and their own personal knowledge as datasets. In using pro-shooting media-based accounts, as Goffman (1979) noted of advertisements, the very representation of what is promoted as suitable and desirable reveals the cultural norms and values of social phenomenon. Immediately here, alcohol plays a part in adverts in the shooting press. Amongst the adverts for shotguns, riflescopes and tweed are all forms of drinking paraphernalia, from hip flasks and glasses to bespoke drinks cabinets for the rear of the Range Rover or 4X4 vehicle. It seems that alcohol – whether wittingly or unwittingly – is performing a role during the sporting day. The paper will draw hence upon the theoretical lens of the consumption of the countryside by social actors at the micro level and to evaluate the performance of those spaces as promoted by participants through the sporting media and literatures. Like interviews, these sources offer a collective insight into sporting shooting, but with advantages and disadvantages. In this case, insight into a relatively closed and culturally distinctive social world.

The overall task of the paper is two-fold. To (a) understand sporting shooting and how alcohol sits within its cultural performance and (b) then to challenge whether it is problematic on the three grounds of health and safety, the future of legal ownership of guns and the sustainability of the activity of shooting. In doing so, the paper argues that the social meaning of sporting shooting in the UK must be understood by placing it in the wider context of a reconfiguring global countryside. That is, the examination of alcohol's role in game shooting is a case of the particular speaking to the general. For whilst it possesses distinct characteristics, it links to theoretical debates taking

place around change in rural and urban contexts and that, in this instance at least, the country is not divorced from the city.

The culture of sporting shooting and the role of alcohol

The study of the elite, rural field of sporting shooting is not a popular sub-field of sociology and as a result it has received little attention from social scientists in the UK with the exception of Cox et al. (1996). The next section will therefore describe, explain and contextualise the activity before looking specifically at the role of alcohol in this particular sporting context.

The essence of sporting shooting in the UK primarily involves the shooting of quarry species in the air or 'on the wing'. Sporting shooting is a broad term and includes pheasant, partridge, grouse, deer and pigeon shooting. This paper focuses solely upon gamebird shooting, which includes pheasant, partridge and grouse, as the others require different organization, preparation and company. Game shooting, despite arguments to the contrary by pro-shooting organisations, is elitist and niche. It is an expensive sport in which to participate regularly, as websites advertising shoot days (such as <http://www.gunsonpegs.com>) show. Commercially sold game shooting days vary from a few hundred pounds for an end-of-season day to £2,450 in Derbyshire for a 150 brace grouse day, mid-September 2013. The cost relates to the total number of birds shot that day or 'bag' and towards the end of the season these will decline. So game shooting is extremely high-cost when compared with other sports. A shotgun, for instance, costs considerably much more to legally own and use than purchasing a swimming costume and visiting a public baths. A matching pair of the very best

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English guns from a renowned gunsmith, such as Purdey's, costing considerably more than even the most innovative of Speedo competitive swimsuits.

Game shooting is hence the preserve of wealthy individuals and the concentration of wealth around the South and London (Burrows, 2013) is reflected in the demographics of participants, who are not necessarily resident in rural spaces where the very best game shooting is to be found. Native grouse are only to be found in the North of England, Scotland and Ireland, yet an advertisement for St. James'-based London gun and rifle makers William Evans shows that consumers span both rural and urban audiences. The strapline of their advert appearing in *Fieldsports*, is 'head in the city, heart in the country' and this reflects that game shooting participants include titled rural elites with bases in the city, urban professionals escaping the city and also international travellers (*Fieldsports*, 2013/14). Whilst sporting shooting is an activity that by necessity takes place in rural locales, it is global in the way it bypasses urban-rural and nation state distinctions. The implications of this will be returned to later.

The focus upon shooting the quarry species and driven game shooting's commercial character means that there is a competitive aspect to shooting, but with an important difference. World record holder Peter Wilson took gold in the men's double (clay) trap at the London 2012 Olympics, but live quarry shooting on a shoot day is different. There is no prize, league or award, other than a shoot card given to each Gun at the end of the day that lists the names of those shooting or 'Guns' and a summary of the bag by species. Yet, through the way the day is organised, the quality of each other's shooting is on view to all shooting participants, with the exception of

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3 where Guns may be positioned in or near woodland. The organization of the shoot
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5 day has the Guns organised standing in a numbered line, in view of one another and
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7 they then rotate their position or ‘peg’ numbers across the day. Whilst not formally
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9 scored, there is a performative presentation of self taking place and with it a pressure
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11 to publicly display competence (Goffman, 1959). Palmer (2012) makes a similar case
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13 for noting that both agency and the ‘spectacular’ appear in sporting contexts (such as
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15 global events):
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20 Too often, studies of ‘the spectacular’ have focused on the razzle dazzle, the
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22 pomp and the ceremony, whilst ignoring the processes of human intervention
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24 and accomplishment whereby spectacles are made to possess these qualities.
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26 In other words, it is not sufficient to assume that public spectacles are just part
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28 and parcel of the fall out of popular culture. As sports analysts, we need to
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30 address the role of human agency in the mounting of the mega-event (Palmer,
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32 2000: 366).
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39 The metaphor of the spectacle and argument for attention to be paid to human agency
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41 is apt for the understanding the nature of game shooting on a further level. For
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43 example, the stereotypes surrounding the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA) member,
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45 located in the semi-public space of the local public house, are a very different locale
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47 to the rural, remote visibility of the game shot, but the perceived presentational
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49 eccentricities are not. For the ale drinker, the surrounding cultural myths of this
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51 social group include their “quintessentially bearded” demeanour (Thurnell-Read
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53 2013:6.2). Contrast this with Heley’s (2010) newcomers to sporting shooting, studied
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55 via an ethnography, when he argued were “absorbed in their gentrified identities” and
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the “symbolic markers” of “the identity [of] [...] the country squire” (Heley 2010:326). Heley (2010) argued that the visual display of shooting dress made them “objects of derision”, as one of his respondents explained:

You say about a new squirearchy, it is the classic example. There is one person, who I actually get on really well with, he wears plus fours [short trousers] and the tweed jacket and boots; the whole kit and caboodle. He’s a smashing chap and everything, but when he turns up in the pub after a shoot in the plus fours and tweeds I feel embarrassed and so do some of the others. I am not taking the piss, but who does he think he is? The Duke of Bedford? (Heley, 2010:326).

The very visual aspects of involvement in sub-cultures, alluded to by Thurnell-Read (2013) in his reference to Maciej Dakowicz’s photography of the night-time drinking economy in Cardiff city (in Wales), echoes work by photographer Martin Parr on displays of wealth by the super-elite at play (Parr, 2009). The fancy dress of the night out is mirrored by the fancy dress of a big day out and Parr captures the etiquette of the day at the races. Applied to game shooting, former Blur band-member-turned-country-gent and cheese-maker Alex James described his own resistance to shoot day dress codes:

The really interesting thing is that the country really is the last bastion of British formality, so it is a really good area to play with. I went out shooting a while back and I was wearing a bright red Aubin & Wills [British now defunct clothing label] kagoule [sic] and tight purple corduroy trousers. I wore them

on purpose because you never ever see someone in a shooting party dressed like that, there is such a rigid code. People were looking at me absolutely horrified, but you know, it was my farm so you can kiss my arse (James 2011, unpaginated).

Here “the body is [...] read as a spectacular and as a carnivalesque transgression of the everyday”, but not through alcohol consumption in this instance (Thurnell-Read, 2013: 5.6). The cache of the rural ‘look’ in mainstream fashion has been acknowledged (Goodrum and Hunt, 2011), but here self-presentation denotes membership of a minority group and an ability to display the correct attire. The shooting season runs during the British winter months, so the climate is influential, but shooting dress is not entirely derived from practical necessity – a Gun will not shoot better for having worn a tie. To shoot is to experience the formality and social forms that James (2011) describes and emersion into the self- and socially-policed etiquette constructing sporting shooting. Clothing is hence more about form than function.

The ritual organization of the day and its dress code capture the very visual display that game shooting involves. It also invites us to think about the meaning of participation in that activity, given that it not a ‘scored’ sporting activity or one that requires high levels of physical fitness compared to other rurally-based sports such as fell-running. This shows the complex and distinctive characteristics of game shooting as a self-policing activity through the mutual visibility of participants and consequently that expectations of norms and behaviours are both socially-monitored and self-monitored. It is this self-policing character of game shooting has a key

bearing upon the role of alcohol in a shoot day.

In a time-and-motion sense, the physical activity of shooting alone itself does not fill the whole day. There is, too, for participants a strong social character as the following extract from an article by *The Field* editor, Jonathan Young, recounts of a visit to a prestigious shoot:

A party of guns, 12-bores in slips, gundogs in tow, strolled down the high street of Pickering, North Yorkshire. Heads were slightly muzzy after a dinner verging on a banquet [including] a slab of longhorn beef [...]. They accompanied by a battery of champagne, burgundy and cognac [...]. They stopped at Orvis, to be welcomed with a kick-starter of Glenmorangie [malt whisky], before proceeding down the hill to Pickering station, run by the North Yorkshire Moors Railway. Steaming gently between Pickering and Whitby, its train runs via Goathland [terminus for Hogwarts] [...] Pindar had booked his party into two Pullman carriages, including the Great Western Observation Saloon Car, built in the Thirties. Favoured recently by The Prince of Wales as a quiet spot for a cucumber sandwich (Young 2013:42-43).

This captures several aspects of shooting. It confirms the exclusive character of top-end shooting, as not every shoot will reserve two carriages on a heritage line and that alcohol is synonymous with hospitality during the day. For example, the generic format of the shooting day, as gauged from websites advertising shoot days (such as <http://www.gunsonpegs.com>) includes refreshments and lunch in the price. Whilst the quality of the lunch is not the primary attraction, it forms part of a commercial

transaction and will have a bearing upon repeat sales. Hospitality, as a result, becomes an integral part of the day.

Game shooting contributes £1.6 billion to the UK economy (PACEC, 2006). As Bourdieu (1984:6) observed, “taste classifies and classifies the classifier” and there is a cultural character to sporting shooting that sits alongside its primary activity of shooting the quarry species. Refreshments would carry an expectation to match the scale of the day: the bullshot of this paper’s title; the malts, sloe gin, champagne and claret with roast lunch. Whilst game shooting is niche and elitist, it is nevertheless an important player in the countryside on an economic basis alone. It is in this light that the role and function of alcohol during the shoot day merits critical attention.

The organisation or timetable of the shoot day shapes how and where refreshment is offered and can be taken. Typically, the day will open with a early morning briefing by the shoot captain or gamekeeper and the Guns will randomly draw their peg numbers. The briefing will establish what species beyond game are permissible and when. The main activity of the day the follows, a series of ‘drives’ that involves the Guns standing by their allotted peg, marked out by a stick or small post. The day may include five or more drives, in between which will be breaks for refreshments such as mid-morning and then followed by more drives and then a shoot lunch. There may, potentially, a final few drives before close but some shoots hold a late lunch and conclude the day there.

The organisation of game shooting and social conduct around shooting allows ample *opportunity* across the day, in breaks, to enjoy the host’s hospitality. The nature of

the live quarry species means that the vagaries of the British weather and the appearance of exact numbers of gamebirds cannot be guaranteed (see Hillyard and Burridge 2012), but the quality and quantity of the hospitality of food and of drink can. As Downing (2013) notes, it is the norm to offer the Guns and their guests an alcoholic drink at mid-morning break and again at lunchtime. This can be wine over lunch and a spirit-based shot mid-morning, such as sloe gin (gin infused with UK native wild plant sloe berries). So, it is only cultural norms and expectations that limit consumption during the shoot day. Thurnell-Read (2013) argues, “Men, it is suggested, will learn to read and enact codes of not just appropriate drinking but specifically masculine drinking practices which will condition their relationship to alcohol” (Thurnell-Read 2013:2.2). In his discussion of lager louts and real ale snobs, he began to unpack the cultural hegemony framing these two participant drinking groups. This enabled him to challenge the “clear celebration of the loss of bodily control associated with heavy drinking” such as within stag tourism and to alternatively suggest that alcohol consumption amongst the young can also be about the formation of social bonds and a release from social pressures (Thurnell-Read 2013:2.6).

The complete loss of control, such as the example of vomiting used by Thurnell-Read (2013), does not apply to a shoot day. In the wake of the Peterlee shootings, the Police have revoked licenses in cases relating to the loss of self-control (Northern Echo, 2014). The lager lout, ale drinker and imbibing sporting shooter all sit within a given cultural context for both the immediate participant group and also the wider societal norms and values. The cultural consumption of alcohol during the shoot day has a distinct, more sociable role. Like Thurnell-Read’s (2013) description of the ale

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3 drinker, drinking during the shoot day is for quality above quantity as within this
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5 context it will not enhance their shooting prowess. Here the analytic lens of alcohol
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7 when applied to sporting shooting reveals that game shooting is about self-regulated
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9 demeanour. This then informs the consumption of alcohol and relative notions of
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11 shooting competence, competition and compliance.
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17 The role alcohol fulfils also teases out and provides an insight into tensions between
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19 the non-competitive nature of game shooting vis-à-vis its etiquette or self-policed
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21 conduct. That is, how the pressure to display a competent self alongside what is
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23 considered to be 'sporting conduct' in a context where a winner/ loser distinction is
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25 absent. McKay and Roderick (2010) noted the profound pressure applied to Olympic
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27 competitors and professional athletics. As discussed, game shooting is simply not
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29 competitive in the sense England fast-bowler Stuart Broad articulated for cricket and
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31 that there is no glory in coming second. So how is the 'sporting' character of
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33 shooting displayed and breached?
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39 The scale of the financial outlay involved suggests that, there is an expectation to
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41 shoot reasonably well, but this is tempered by a cultural code of conduct relating to
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43 what to shoot. The unpredictable flight pattern of incoming birds, for example in
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45 potential strong winds, asks the Gun to read their bird and – importantly – which are
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47 their neighbour's. The term 'eye wipe' is used to describe where you have poached
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49 (i.e. shot) your neighbour's bird and this is frowned upon and, furthermore, good
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51 sporting conduct would encourage you *not* to necessarily take all of the birds
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53 legitimately coming your way. So, for instance, if a neighbouring gun has been out of
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55 the shooting, then to leave some for them would be such an example of good sporting
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conduct. So what is deemed good sporting conduct refers to the day in the round, rather than just an activity *per se*. Whilst it is an individual, not a team, sport it nevertheless has an inherently social character that frames both conduct and enjoyment. Alcohol sits within this code of conduct and permits its enjoyment, but polices acceptable levels of consumption.

Self-policing and how to handle a shoot that overindulges in alcohol is discussed by Downing (2013). He argued that responsibility falls to everyone concerned, but that the shoot captain is primarily liable for safety management during the day. If the captain is unsuccessful in inviting the individuals concerned to modify their behaviour, Downing (2013) advocated simply not attending that shoot again and informing the BASC or Countryside Alliance of your reason for doing so. Downing (2013) is the shooting consultant to the Countryside Alliance and Vice-President of the BASC, so well-placed to advise. Yet, given that sporting shooting is about enjoyment as much as competition, the etiquette surrounding this elitist activity is complex. What if the host is the party responsible? What if it is the landowner's son or daughter?! Under Downing's policy, 'wet-led' shoots will self-congregate, but ultimately and essentially remain self-policed as one final example captures.

There is a unique relationship between culture of alcohol in sporting shooting and its social situation or setting. It takes place outside in the British winter and Guns at their pegs, for safety, need to be relatively static before the drive. Towards the close of the season, the weather is invariably inclement and hence favoured tipples are designed to be both sustaining and fortifying. A regular *Shooting Times* contributor reveals his

own version of an alcoholic concoction, which is designed to be shared and to enhance the enjoyment at his own, private shoot – the bullshot of the title:

Time now for a drink break. We ambled back to the farm and gathered round the vehicles as I broke out a flask of bullshot and some warm sausages. My bullshot recipe is simple: two or three cans of beef consommé which are heated to a point just below boiling, and to which is then added a hearty dose of vodka, Worcester sauce and Tabasco. This mixture will act as an interior boiler and bring a rosy flush to the cheeks! (Turnstone, 2014)

The description of sporting shooting in the UK offered above sought to capture its distinctiveness compared to other sports. Alcohol has a convivial role, but is also sustaining when taken alongside food. Much like the walker may eat a cereal bar or Kendal mint cake and the tennis player a banana, bullshot is the shooting equivalent – albeit more due to the cold than the exertion. It is its social setting and situation that resists ready comparison to other sports, for ‘sporting conduct’ is an individual judgement and some rituals have little practical purpose, such as the dress code. There is no explicit or standardised code of conduct in the same way that there is in football, for example, following an on-field injury. Yet the dimension of competitiveness vis-à-vis alcohol offers a way to gain a critical insight into changes taking place in the British countryside. The aspect of competitiveness sits against the general mores of shooting, but alone it is not problematic. Yet when alcohol is involved, it has the potential to be. The paper now turns to consider whether the role of alcohol in sporting shooting has the capacity to be problematic. It does so on three

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grounds: health and safety of participants; the regulation of gun ownership and; the viability of game shooting’s future.

In the shooting literature, there is no evidence that *non*-drinkers in sport shooting cultures are socially excluded, yet there is a contradiction in the code of conduct relating to alcohol. That is, it is frowned upon to arrive with a hangover, but seemingly acceptable to accumulate one across the day and, from Young’s (2013, description of the Yorkshire shoot above, from the off. Osborne (2013), writing in *The Field*, offers ten grouse shooting tips for the start of the season and one expresses concern with the consumption of alcohol during the shoot day. For Thurnell-Read (2013) argues that, “drinking practices and settings are sites where notions of appropriate and inappropriate masculinity are negotiated” (Thurnell-Read, 2013:1.1) Osborne (2013), too, sees changing cultural norms in drinking cultures:

The biggest change I have seen in my shooting lifetime has been in the attitude towards alcohol being drunk on shoots. At a time when we consume considerably less alcohol when driving, it does seem strange that otherwise perfectly sensible men believe it is prudent to consume often quite considerable quantities of alcohol during the morning and at lunch-time on a shoot day and yet in the afternoon continue to shoot at probably the most dangerous game bird [grouse] in the UK (Osborne, 2013:70).

Osborne (2013) argues that, from his own perception and experience, more shooting accidents occur in the afternoon than morning and this is a consequence of alcohol consumption. There are no figures to corroborate this account, but Osborne describes

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3 how a neighbouring Gun once put three pellets in him shows he has firsthand
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5 experience. The sound use and handling of shotguns is vital to health and safety on a
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7 shoot, but such incidents arise not because of poor planning or absence of a risk
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9 assessment but more due to inexperience on the part of the Gun and not malice in
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11 Osborne's (2013) view. His explanation holds that grouse, as birds that fly faster and
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13 lower than any other game species, demand very careful self-policing by the Gun and
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15 more self-control than can be provided by the shoot or by the guidance of a
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17 companion or 'loader.' Those who lack experience, which he considers to be those
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19 who have not shot half a dozen days before, are more error prone. Those at risk
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21 include neighbouring Guns, loaders standing with Guns and the flankers, who are the
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23 beating the birds and standing at the end of the line of Guns. That grouse on the wing
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25 are capable of breaking the motorway speed limit in the UK lends support to
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27 Osborne's argument.
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34 This is a health and safety issue that cannot be entirely addressed by adapting the
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36 environment, for instance, by the technique many grouse moors use of placing canes,
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38 sticks or safety frames around the grouse butt, which is a low, semi-circle stone wall
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40 in which the Gun and their loader stands. As Osborne points out, the Guns adjust
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42 their stance as birds approach and therefore there remains the capacity for human
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44 error. Therefore, the problem alcohol presents can only be alleviated by careful
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46 thought by the Gun, "moderation" in alcohol intake and also the proactive wearing of
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48 shot-proof glasses (Osborne, 2013:70). On the basis that even one incident is
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50 unacceptable, alcohol consumption during a shooting day in this light is problematic.
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53 Whilst the shotgun is not, unlike the semi-automatic weapons available in the United
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55 States, battle grade, and its pellets (a cartridge contains small pellets, rather than a
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bullet) are only fatal at close range, serious injuries are still possible in the field – “It takes only one pellet to lose an eye” (Osborne, 2013:70). Yet media reporting of shootings support Osborne’s perception of incompetence, rather than drunken mis-safety. For example, Dick Cheney inadvertently shot a companion whilst quail shooting in the US (CNN, 1996). European laws in France and Scandinavia involve Guns wearing high-visibility tabards, but this is where Guns are walking, rather than standing at peg and would not apply to grouse-shooting Guns have clear sight of one another before a drive begins.

The solution to the concern expressed about alcohol consumption *during* the shooting day rests within the community, rather than policy or policing debates. The onus rests with the Gun to check the cultural and potentially commercially-influenced generosity of the host. In the cultural context of shooting, this is perhaps more difficult where home-brewed or concocted beverages are offered, the strength of which is more difficult to ascertain than those served in a pub. Perhaps related to this, the logistical organisation of the day makes any form of regulation realistically impossible in policing terms, given that shooting and even driving over the legal limit in the UK is not illegal whilst on private land and it would not be cost-effective for police officers to spend time randomly breathalysing people in remote areas. This does introduce the second criterion by which the relationship alcohol and shooting can be evaluated as problematic. This relates to the point of certificate issue, permitting the legal ownership of shotguns, as one means by which the risk of potential alcohol mis-use may be addressed.

Osborne (2013) makes a useful and related point by comparing drinking during the

shoot day with shooting at clay shooting grounds. The former is not frowned upon, but the latter is and nor would it be advisable prior to a firearms licensing officer's home visit. Part of the certificate issuing process involves such a visit to inspect security in the home or location where weapon are to be secured stored and the assessment of intemperate habits form part of the evaluation. The question therefore arises, why should drinking be acceptable when actually using the shotgun, once legally permitted to own and use? The Peterlee shootings in the UK revealed the inadequacies of the Police delivery of policy when they approved the return of shotguns to an individual intoxicated during several Police home visits relating to domestic violence abuse. This, according to the subsequent Police inquiry, was a failure on the part of the Durham Police Service, not the fault of current legislation (IPCC, 2012). Yet recent Police and shooting community conferences discussing reform have considered whether applicants' recycling bins should be inspected as part of the home visit (and unbeknown to the applicants), therefore private alcohol consumption away from the shoot day becomes problematically associated with game shooting. These debates are on-going and the Durham Constabulary has already exceeded Home Office guidelines by inviting applicants to attach a letter from their GP or doctor by implying this is a requirement. It is unclear how inspecting recycling bins or a GP's letter would enhance public safety in the light of the above discussion.

The final problem that the paper addresses in relation to alcohol consumption and game shooting is one already touched upon and relates to the social and friendship dimension of countrysports. Thurnell-Read (2013) pointed to the role of interaction and conviviality in relation to alcohol consumption, arguing "Friendship, for example, is central to many drinking practices and, as such, should not be overlooked in favour

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of a focus solely on the individual body of the drinker” (Thurnell-Read 2013:8.3). In this particular sporting context, there is something distinct about the role of alcohol beyond traditional treatments in the sociology of sport because it is not about sporting prowess in a competitive sense and it also reveals significant changes taking place in the global countryside.

The social role of shooting can have very different connotations for both participants and shooting estate owners alike. That is, the very status and role of elite rural sports in a global, post-industrial society. The argument now uses alcohol as an analytic lens to suggest that sporting shooting reflects wider changes in the global countryside. This holds implications for the future not merely of sporting shooting, but also the status of the countryside in our cultural imagination and as a resource. This is captured by classifying game shooting participants into two, distinct cultures.

The Two Cultures

The networking aspect of shooting has long been noted, as satirised by the UK’s *Daily Telegraph* cartoon character of City financier Alex Masterley:

Figure 1 about here

The two cultures reflects those there to network, like Alex, and those there for the less tangible, but deeply rewarding, simple pleasure of being in the British countryside. Cox el. (1994a), drawing upon Goffman’s description of the total institution, argued that countrysports such as hunting, possess a ‘total’ social institutional character. Here individuals heavily invest their own sense of self and identity in the activity. At

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3 a meso theoretical level, Geertz's (1973) notion of deep play and the Balinese
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5 cockfight reaches across the people and their culture. Geertz's (1973) cockfight
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7 metaphor is not merely about the obvious distinctions between gender roles, but far
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9 deeper. For the game shot, but not the networker, sporting shooting involves a similar
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11 form of total cultural immersion. A collection of the late John Humphreys' sporting
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13 writing, a long-term columnist for both established country titles *Shooting Times* and
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15 *Country Life*, is one such example (Humphreys, 2012). He describes the Boxing Day
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17 shoot on his own land and what it came to mean to him:
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23 It's a lovely day. All rules, save those of safety, may be relaxed, the size of
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25 the bag is immaterial, no pressure, and the party wallows in a Pickwickian
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27 haze of nostalgia and tradition (Humphreys, 2012:63).
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32 Humphreys (2012) further recounts how generations of his family participate and
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34 their end-of-the-day rituals – including a stiff drink – on returning home after a final
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36 duck shoot at dusk:
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41 kick off boots, drinks are thrust into willing hands, ash logs glow and the
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43 curtains are drawn against the night. The roar of conversation is deafening.
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45 [...] For one night, we sidestep worries about multiculturalism, political
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47 correctness, the neighbours, council bullies, the Government, speed cameras,
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49 foreign wars, official busybodies and the credit crunch, and reclaim a gentle
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51 way of life under threat. As long as the family Boxing Day potter survives,
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53 there will be a corner of an increasingly foreign field that is forever England
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55 (Humphreys, 2012:64).
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These personal sentiments contrast with Heley’s (2010) representation of a ‘new squirearchy’ self-inducting into country sports and village life. Heley (2010) perceived that his ‘new squires’ were peripheral, rather than achieving their ambition to join the gentry. Yet Heley missed this ‘deep play’ or total immersion in countrysports, of the kind that Humphreys (2012) conveys. Nor did Heley place countrysports in their global context, by examining the existing rural elite or shifting patterns of land ownership now shaping the character of the British countryside. This is a key shift and heralds the other cultural side to Humphreys’ deep play consumption of a sporting lifestyle.

The countryside has long been characterized in terms of the two cultural stereotypes of local and newcomer – insiders and outsiders (Newby, 1977). The two cultures found inside sporting shooting problematizes this distinction, as it is no longer derived purely upon from residence. As game shooting participants demonstrate, it is quite possible to live in the city, but pursue country leisure pursuits and the same holds too for residents in the country who exercise an urban pattern of consumption. As rural theorist Murdoch (2006) argued, geographic zones no longer define the rural, but is also a cultural resource performed by the networks and actors flowing through those spaces. Murdoch (2006), Edensor (2006) and Halfacree (2007) also mark a turning point in rural analysis that places more weight upon the capacity of social actors to shape their locales. In the same way that Roderick (2006) study of professional football’s identities unpacks the differing scales of personal self and self-investment made by these sportsmen, when applied to the two cultures of game shooting is suggests that the British countryside *will change as a result*. For example, Roderick

(2013) most recently argued how it is possible to do sport as a job, but resist the ideological commitment demanded by the managerial ethos of football. It therefore may hold that sporting shooters possess the inverse, a total investment of self, but in an amateur social leisure activity. This passionate amateur contrasts strikingly with those parachuting in to participate for networking opportunities. The implication of this distinction between two cultures via the analytic lens of alcohol's role does not on first glance seem significant. Yet their different cultures and consumption of alcohol speak to the transaction of commerce, rather than the sociality of the 'bath bird' of the Country Gun captured by cartoonist Brynn Parry. Here, the cartoon depicts the Gun defrosting in the bath at the end of the shoot day, whiskey in hand and dog at his feet, remembering his best bird of the day. For this deeply immersed culture, alcohol is not problematic, yet there may be problems less derived from the consumption of alcohol than the rise of networking-orientated culture holds for the future of sporting shooting itself. Alcohol consumption is an early symptom of a much wider trend taking place in the global countryside.

The *Financial Times* (FT) (2013) traced the impact of the current global recession upon the relative value of a country estate when contrasted to rising property prices in the UK capital. The FT notes that to buy an estate in Britain has effectively become relatively cheap and doubly lucrative, as landownership is one way of offsetting inheritance tax. In their analysis and one I have extended in Hillyard (2013), the FT argued that there are two styles of purchasers seeking to 'control the view' of a country estate – those looking to use the estate personally for their own recreational pursuits and those seeking to maximise the estate's assets across the board as a working investment. Alcohol's role within these two cultures therefore reveals

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emergent divisions within the British countryside. Whilst the specific consumption of alcohol itself during a shooting day is unlikely to be externally regulated in the near future, that is not to say there will not be implications. For the lens of alcohol casts that two cultures’ participate in shooting into sharper relief. Roderick’s (2013) work again is useful here:

Some players do not continue to internalise the values and norms of the official culture in unreflective ways. Both understand the building toll of their emotional investments in a kind of contingent work which offers little hope of a secure career foothold (Roderick, 2013:13).

The notion of career suggests two outcomes. Osborne (2013) mentioned the experience a shot gains over their shooting lifetime and a game shot who acquires their own estate, however modest, later in their career would be able to cultivate a total sporting identity.¹ Thurnell-Read (2013) highlights the “social aspects of drinking” and furthermore calls for research to “explore further the various embodied drinking practices of older drinkers” (Thurnell-Read, 2013:8.4). He marks the distinction between the young (on the street, spilling out) and old (in the semi-public public house) and the spatial dimension has implications of the regulation of drinking during the sporting day, which involves “the visual policing of the body within late capitalism” (Thurnell-Read, 2013:7.3). To take this argument a step further in the context of the British countryside, power is exercised here, but moves beyond the sociology of the body. “Power and taste can be asserted through consumption” and the “drinking body does not become [...] detached from social processes” but overlaps with the very management of the spatial practices of rural locales (Thurnell-

Read, 2013: 6.12, 8.3). These social processes, using the latest arguments within rural studies, in turn shape what the countryside becomes. For example, in the same way that Markham (2011) traced the changing role of the village pub, as it transformed from a drinking establishment to provide a broader array of rural services, the two sporting cultures inform the country estate of the future. How each elects to manage country estates will hence shape what their estates then become – either as pursuits of taste and pleasure or commercial and towards the further pursuit and accumulation of capital.

Conclusion

The paper discussed one sporting context in which drinking features, game shooting, and how it is conducted in rural spaces. Alcohol consumption provided a critical lens that served to deconstruct not only the very ‘sporting’ character of this activity, but also broader change in the global countryside. The nature of sporting shooting was distinct, in that it was not necessarily competitive. Alcohol consumption, on health and safety grounds and for the regulation of legal gun ownership was not seen as unduly problematic. However, in the final section of the analysis, by looking at alcohol consumption in game shooting alongside wider patterns of change underway in the British countryside, a broader trend was identified. This change related to sporting shooting as increasingly represented via two cultures. Using the consumption of alcohol as an analytic lens, a distinction was made between the culture that has commercialised shooting as a means to network and a second culture that holds shooting as a totalising leisure pursuit integral to the participant’s identity and way-of-life. For example, Cox and Deeley (1987) see the shooting day as a whole and *sui generis* where shooting, sociability and your participation and that of

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your dogs come together. Hence the metaphor of the quality of the day being synonymous with “good order in which the dogs are kept” reflects the intangible qualities of a day and nevermore so if you have brought them on yourself (Cox and Deeley, quoting Thornton, 1987:1). The dogs, as it were, are for game shooting what the cockfight is to Balinese culture. They are a metaphor for a much wider cultural identity intrinsically bound up and performed via one activity.

The identification of two shooting cultures is rendered visible by via the critical lens of the analysis of alcohol consumption and it also speaks to recent rural theorising. This is where the key implications lie. Understanding the countryside as a site of consumption recognises that the changing investors in sporting estates will change the use of those estates: of the estate as a working asset in every respect (farming, shooting, rental), or where the sporting rights are retained for their own intrinsic use and value. So the featuring of alcohol in sporting shooting reflects a much wider re-orientation taking place in the countryside, of broader cultural change where older, established sporting activities are being reconfigured. Whilst there is a blurring or overlap between the two groups, there is a marked difference between the cartoon Alex and John Humphreys’ country gun. The longer-term impact and effects of this change on the global countryside – and the future of the Boxing Day shoot – remain to be seen and merit further exploration.

1. Although there are rising numbers of women participating in sporting shooting, similarly some using this a more networking opportunities (reflexivity so) than others (cf. McGregor, 2013).

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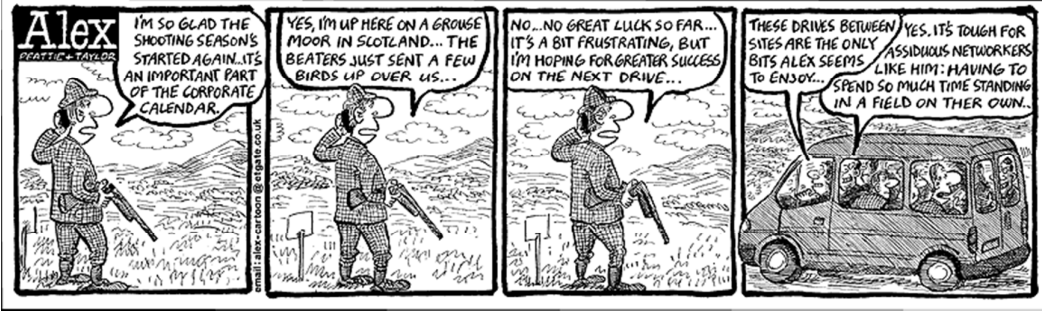
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For Peer Review

Figure 1: Alex Masterley: the two cultures of sporting shooting.



Source: *Daily Telegraph* (2005).